

# IOWA

## Youth Congress 2009



Iowa student representatives elected from **39 targeted high schools** convened November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008, in Des Moines for their 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual session. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, the Congress met in the Iowa House Chambers where Speaker of the House Pat Murphy and Representative Ako Abdul-Samad welcomed them. Both Speaker Murphy and Representative Abdul-Samad encouraged the students to take their duties seriously and recognize the ability they have to one day fill the seats of elected officials for the state of Iowa.

After receiving the welcoming, elections were held for the 2008-2009 Iowa Youth Congress officers. **Elected were:** **Dhrooti Vyas**, Treasurer; **Morgan Murray**, Secretary; **Moses Bomett**, Vice-President; and **Benjamin Nicks**, President. Once Benjamin called the Congress to order, the students caucused into three committees: Civil Rights & Inclusion, Community Betterment, and Education.

The committees caucused and agreed on two of the five bills to be voted out of each committee. The two bills voted out from each committee were then sent to the full Congress in the House Chambers. There the students discussed and debated the six issues.

The three bills the Iowa Youth Congress passed to present to the 83<sup>rd</sup> Iowa General Assembly were:

- 1** Increase of the compulsory age from 16 to 17.
- 2** Coping Awareness and Prevention (CAP), a program for schools to deal with death and suicide.
- 3** Enabling Education Act, allowing immigrant students graduating from Iowa high schools to be charged at an in-state tuition rate while pursuing their education.



## Letter from the President



“This program gives us minority teens a chance to have a voice.”

-IYC President Benjamin Nicks

“This is Benjamin Nicks, President of the 2008-2009 school year of the Iowa Youth Congress. This year was great! I got to meet some great new kids this year and got to see friends from last year’s group. I am here to say that I learned a lot from being in this program. It is amazing. I can not wait to see how it grows over the years. I first would like to say thank you to Melissa and all of our sponsors for creating and supporting this group. This program gives us minority teens a chance to have a voice which is very important because we all have had lots to say but no way of saying it until this organization came around. Thank you all for the opportunity.

Over my period of time in the I.Y.C., I got to meet new people and learn how it feels to be a minority at school and in America. It was great hearing what my fellow members had to say about what we need in order to be treated equal in Iowa. I also gained a lot of respect for myself and who I am as an African American in Iowa. I learned to say how I feel to any and everyone who has questions about how we, the minorities, will make a difference in Iowa. This group has also taught me how to be more responsible and be a leader.

If it was not for this group, I would have not been the bright young man I am today. I love this program and can not wait to see how much it improves in the future. Lastly I once again like to thank Melissa and our sponsors for the great opportunity.”

Sincerely,  
Benjamin Nicks  
Southeast Polk High School



“It was a great honor and pleasure to participate in the 2009 Iowa Youth Congress not only as a member but as the Vice President. This was my first year in the congress and I learned many things from my experiences and meeting new determined students like me. Joy fills my heart seeing how students from all different races and cultures come together with one voice to say in the words of our president, “Yes We Can”. Thank you all. I hope you all have a great time next year at the Congress.”

Sincerely,  
Moses Bomett  
Valley High School

## Youth Congress in Session



Youth Congress members at the State Capital Building



“The Iowa Youth Congress is a superb example of a hands-on-learning experience that allows students the opportunity to see how Iowa government really works. Students learn the qualities of successful leadership, while fostering relationships with their peers from across the state.”

Thomas R. Hobson  
Manager, Government & Public Affairs  
Rockwell Collins



Dream Creator Sponsor  
**Rockwell  
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# Dream Forward Dinner



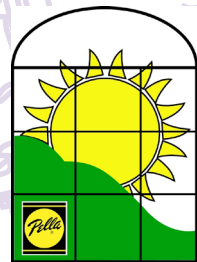
2007-2008 Officers and Chairs receiving recognition from the Governor's office  
From left to right: Devin Farrell, Joseph Chatman, Rubia Alvarez, Fredrick Galoso, Melissa Esquivel, Syeta Glanton

On Friday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, after the Iowa Youth Congress session convened, the student representatives met with over 100 other guests to take part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dream Forward Dinner.

The dinner started with a presentation of awards from the Governor to the previous Youth Congress session's elected officials, as well as recognition of the Iowa Youth Congress and Dream Forward Dinner sponsors.

Guest speaker Roy Juarez, Jr. spoke about his own experience dreaming forward in spite of overwhelming obstacles. Roy shared his life's journey, beginning with his childhood and his early thrust into homelessness. By age 14, Roy was wandering the streets of San Antonio looking for a place to stay each night and carrying a duffle-bag he called home. Even with the odds stacked against him, he spoke of how he was inspired to do whatever it took to receive an education. Roy encouraged the Dream Forward Dinner participants to look past what may seem like insurmountable obstacles to dream of what they can achieve.

After-dinner entertainment was provided by Travis Lloyd of Band of Christians, who got the crowd on its feet and kicked off the dance portion of the evening where Dream Forward Dinner participants busted moves for the rest of the night.



Pella Rolscreen Foundation  
Dream Helper Sponsor



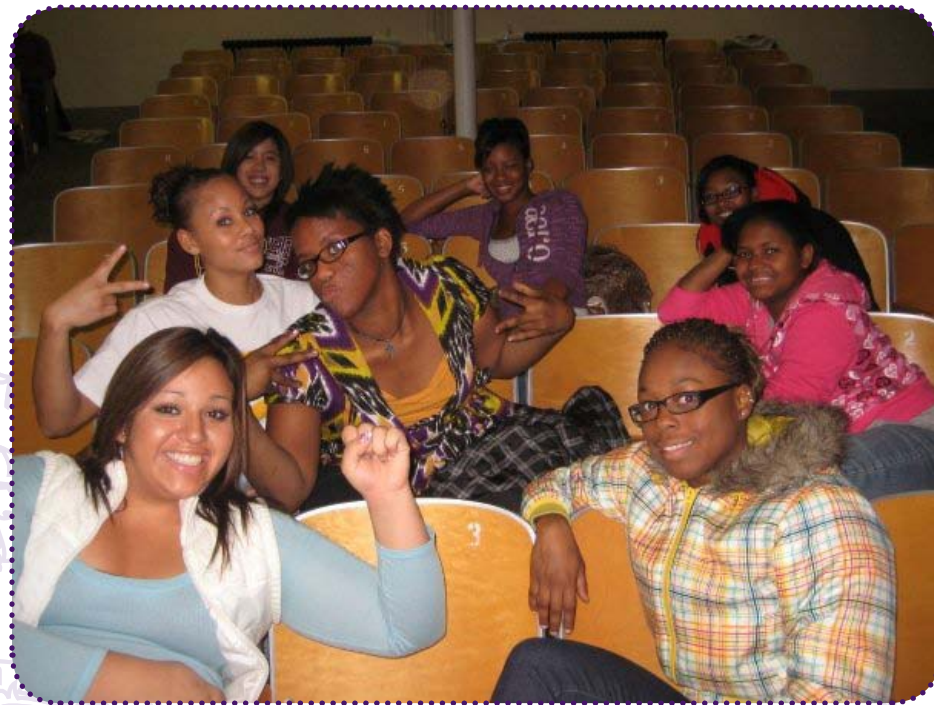
“Life's challenges have a way of shaping and molding us. It is important to understand who we are and who we want to be. With this knowledge we can truly shape and mold our future. Let us be the authors of our own lives.”

Roy Juarez Jr.





## Planning Session



Planning session at East High School on November 15, 2008.

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, the Iowa Youth Congress held their planning session at East High School located in Des Moines. There the students reviewed the bills that were passed in the Iowa House Chambers and began to draft the requirements needed for each bill. Discussions grew and a variety of ideas were presented. Iowa Youth Congress members raised potential questions that legislators may ask when support for a bill is requested, and created a list of pros and cons for each bill.

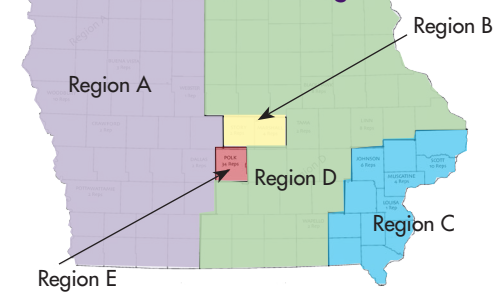
After drafting the three bills, the students gathered to plan how they would have the bills presented and supported by the 83<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. They then convened in the cafeteria where a number of colleges, universities, organizations and businesses were present for a College/Job Fair. Students visited the numerous tables and gathered information. Each of the organizations present donated an item to be raffled to the students. This was a great opportunity for the College/Job fair participants to meet these youth leaders, as well as an excellent opportunity for the students to gain some knowledge from the attendees.

### Participants at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual College/Job Fair

Career & Workforce Connections in DMPS  
Graceland University  
DMACC Urban Campus  
Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co.  
Employee & Family Resources  
Grand View College  
AIB College of Business  
U of I - Center of Diversity & Enrichment  
Grinnell College  
Drake University  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation  
Iowa Lakes Community College  
Simpson College  
Buena Vista University

## Regional Meetings

### 2008-2009 Iowa Youth Congress



#### Each Regional consists of 20 Representatives

Note: The 14 representatives from Lincoln, North, Valley, Southeast Polk and Scavo High School are in Region B.

The map above shows 39 target schools of Iowa's 446 high schools. The total population is 50,922 and minority population is 13,888 (27.3%).

The 100 member Iowa Youth Congress is divided into five regions as shown. Each region of twenty members and their alternates meet on a Saturday for a daylong session to present the three issues they have identified in their high school and local community. Duplicate issues are eliminated or worked into another issue. Systematically the issues are deliberated to determine which three are to be presented before the Iowa Youth Congress session.



Regions C & D group photo after their regional meeting at Kirkwood Community College on October 11, 2008.

The first regional meeting held was at Kirkwood Community College on Saturday, October 11, for Regions C & D. The students discussed and debated the issues presented from each region. In Regions C & D the issues discussed were discrimination, minorities in the workforce, the Dream Act, drop-out age and math and science standard in the schools.

The second regional meeting was held at DMACC Urban Campus the following Saturday. There students from the Des Moines area and surrounding schools convened to represent Regions B & E. Students there discussed and debated on issues such as helping immigrants integrate, a diversity week in schools, sexual education, the drop out rate, and the Dream Act. Coping and Awareness prevention, a program held at Southeast Polk High School, was one of the programs most talked about in the meeting. This program was developed to assist the students within the high school to begin speaking about death and discussing the positive ways of coping with death.

The final regional meeting was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October at Iowa Western Tech Community College in Denison. There Region A convened to discuss various issues. The students spoke about the education system and how the drop out age should be increased, how the counselor's involvement with students should increase, and about assistance for financial help to students from low-income families so they have the opportunity to go to college. Other important topics discussed were the discrimination that occurs within the workplace and amongst minorities.

#### Dream Helper Sponsor





# Officers & Chairs



"My name is Morgan Murray and I am the secretary of the Iowa Youth Congress. Being elected secretary was an accomplishment for me. I am extremely happy to be involved in the Iowa Youth Congress.

I believe it is a positive demonstration of how we not only as minorities, but as students, can be involved in the political process and have a say about the issues that are affecting us. The Iowa Youth Congress has made me want to be more involved and informed about politics. It has made me realize that the issues these legislatures debate are and will affect the people being represented. It is a great way to get minorities informed about the issues that affect us. I am happy to be a part of the Iowa Youth Congress and I believe it will go far."

**Secretary,**  
**Morgan Murray**  
**Central Campus**



"Being elected as one of four cabinet members in Iowa Youth Congress was perhaps my most satisfying experience at the Congress. I was one of four candidates for the election. I gave a speech regarding my aspirations for the Congress and detailing what I thought we could achieve. I was very proud and honored to be elected by the representatives. Iowa Youth Congress is a very enriching experience; having the opportunity to instigate the enactment of legislation that impacts minorities and youth across the state is invaluable. I look forward to next year's congress where the vibrant members of last year's congress and new youth leaders can convene to discuss the prominent minority and youth issues in our state and advance legislation that will solve them."

**Treasurer,**  
**Dhrooti Vyas**  
**Valley High School**



"My experience with the Iowa Youth Congress is one that I will never forget. Having all different types of people from different walks of life, getting together to improve not only the rights of minorities but the rights that some people may have never had before. It was one of the greatest experiences in my life. I got to see some of the future leaders of America and I now know that I can accomplish anything even though it may sometimes seem that I can't. Thanks Melissa for the great program you have put together. It's great to see how many lives you affect and might not even know it."

**Region A Chairman,**  
**Audrianna Bent**  
**Lincoln High School**



"The Iowa Youth Congress has made a huge impact on the community. Individuals out in society are taking time to understand the views of us teenagers. It's a great group to continue in the future and we are making a change in Iowa for all Iowans."

**Region B Chairman,**  
**Amina Lovan**  
**Southeast Polk High School**



"As an Iowa Youth Congress Representative and the chairman for region C, I was really glad to get the chance to be able to affect Iowa Law and its view of citizens' rights and concerns. This was all done through a legislative process brought to the forefront by representatives and alternates from all over the state. I enjoyed my time in this rising program and I would like to continue."

**Region C Chairman,**  
**Cameron Griffin-Redmond**  
**West Senior High**



"This was my first time to be involved with the Iowa Youth Congress. At the first regional meeting, I did nothing but voted on the bills that we should suggest to the legislature. Later we were ready to vote for elections so I wanted to help out and show them that deaf people can do it too! So that's how I get elected for the chair of my region and I was happy about it. I enjoyed listening to other people discuss the topics of the bills. I'm trying to propose deaf issues to the Legislature next year! =] Thank to the people who voted for me as the chair of Region E! I had fun being in the Iowa Youth Congress!"

**Region E Chairman,**  
**Kensie Channon**  
**East High School**



"The Iowa Youth Congress has made an impact on my life, from changing personal opinions and views to building character, skills and knowledge. I went into the program not knowing what to expect and came out with myriad of knowledge regarding everything from Roberts Rules of Order to how the Iowa House runs. Not only does IYC give minority youth an opportunity to get involved and implement change for the better within their communities, but the program brings together 100 of the brightest students from across Iowa to share ideas and set futures in motion. Convening in state chambers and meeting legislators gave each IYC member an opportunity that some may only ever dream of.

After two years in the program and one more on the way, being elected a regional chairperson has only made this experience more thrilling. Bringing my own ideas to the table and combining them with the ideas of my fellow IYC members has opened my eyes tremendously. In being a chairperson for the IYC, I challenged myself to assume the role of a leader, which has also contributed to making me a more skilled individual.

I am very thankful and fortunate to be part of an organization like the Iowa Youth Congress."

**Region D Chairman,**  
**Alia Amer**  
**Washington High School**

**Dream Helper Sponsor**

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# Graduation Class of 2009

# Letter from Program Manager

**Cedar Rapids**  
**Washington H.S.**  
Tosha Harrison

**Council Bluffs**  
**Lincoln H.S.**  
Audrianna Bent

**Davenport**  
**Central H.S.**  
Ebonie Butler  
Devin Farrell  
Katie Kustes  
Courtney Lopez  
Nhu Nguyen

**West H.S.**  
Amanda Cadena

**Denison**  
**Denison H.S.**  
Christian Magana

**Des Moines**  
**Central Campus**  
Darikia Kouangvan  
Claudia Kyalangalilwa  
Dionna Langford  
Morgan Murray

**East H.S.**  
Naipong Vang

**Hoover H.S.**  
Bryne Berry  
Thao Pham

**Lincoln H.S.**  
Katherine Jimenez

**Iowa City**  
**Iowa City H.S.**  
Mayra Chavez  
Ralph Washington

**West H.S.**  
Tara McKinney

**Muscatine**  
**Muscatine H.S.**  
Joseph Chatman IV  
Frederick Galoso  
Tyler Hagy  
Mayra Juarez

**Ottumwa**  
**Ottumwa H.S.**  
Claudia Carrillo  
Carmen Mulatillo

**Pleasant Hill**  
**Southeast Polk H.S.**  
Amina Lovan  
Benjamin Nicks

**Sioux City**  
**East H.S.**  
Rubia Alvarez  
Xochitl De Anda

**West H.S.**  
Shalena Dupree  
Jamarcus Lucas  
Rosanna Nguyen  
Melanie Pham  
Kieonna Strong  
Gabriel Williams

**Waterloo**  
**Expo H.S.**  
Darius Phillips

**West Des Moines**  
**Valley H.S.**  
Moses Bomett

## A Special Thanks & Farewell to Garba Munkaila



Garba Munkaila, participated this year in the Iowa Youth Congress representing East High School in Des Moines as an exchange student from Nigeria. He was able to view the leadership skills these Iowa Youth Congress students have and was great at providing feedback. Garba hopes that with this program deaf students will use their voice and that the issues they have concerns about will help educate all people.

Thank you Garba for your interest and dedication to the Iowa Youth Congress. You will be missed.

Dream Maker Sponsor



Dear Seniors,

Congratulations on all your success in completing high school and participating in the Iowa Youth Congress. You have contributed so much to the program, having your concerns heard across the state while also focusing on your dedication to an education. Some of you have been a part of the Iowa Youth Congress from the beginning and have been able to see the program grow.

Now as you graduate from high school, I hope you take with you the experience you gained from this program and the importance it is to be civically engaged in your community. Whether you decide to pursue your education, join the military, or contribute to the workforce, I ask that you never forget where you came from and who you are.

It has been a pleasure seeing you grow and while you may face many obstacles in the real world, remember this:

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest that glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fears, our presence automatically liberates others."*

*- Nelson Mandela, Inaugural speech, 1994*

May you always know that if there is anything I may be able to assist you with, I am always available. Don't hesitate to ask. Continue being the leaders that you are.

One of Your Biggest Supporters,

**Melissa Esquivel**

**Program Manager**

We embark on this work because among the most endearing gifts that one generation gives the next is the gift of heritage and the opportunity for a better life. The purpose of this project is to evoke a sense of community and place and inspire the coming generation with hope.

## Become a Dream Forward Sponsor

The Iowa Youth Congress is a program made possible in large part by private contributions. Individual contributions can be made to the Iowa Division of Latino Affairs in support of the Iowa Youth Congress. Corporate sponsorships are available in the following levels:

Dream Creator (\$5,000)

Dream Maker (\$3,500)

Dream Helper (\$2,500)

### 2008 Sponsors

### To our 2008 Dream Forward Sponsors

Thank you for your support, your help and your words of encouragement.

It is because of you that the Iowa Youth Congress is a success. One with your continuing support, will this be a permanent success story in Iowa.

### Special Thanks To:

East High School in Des Moines,  
The Commission on the Status of Iowans of Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage,  
The Iowa Division of Deaf Services, Iowa Status of African-Americans,  
Hal & Avril Chase, Mary Campos, Ake Phetdavieng,  
Joe Yeager, Mark Brandsgard, Dave Schrader,  
Speaker of the House Pat Murphy, Representative Ako Abdul-Samad,  
Iowa Department of Education, Iowa College Access Network,  
all individuals who purchased a ticket to the Dream Forward Dinner,  
and all representatives of colleges/universities and companies  
which participated at the job/college fair.

**Rockwell  
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